DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 468 970 RC 023 722

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TITLE	Wilderness Leadership for Physical Education Majors: The Current National Status of Wilderness Education.
PUB DATE	2002-02-00
NOTE	12p.; In: Wilderness Education Association 2002 National Conference Proceedings (Bradford Woods, Indiana, February 7-9, 2002); see RC 023 720.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*College Curriculum; College Programs; Higher Education; *Outdoor Education; *Physical Education; Physical Education Teachers; School Surveys; Standards; *Teacher Education Programs; Textbooks

ABSTRACT

Outdoor/adventure education is a relatively new content area required by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education for students majoring in physical education. Teacher preparation programs in physical education have yet to adopt a standardized curriculum. A survey was completed by 162 of the 536 physical education programs in U.S. colleges and universities. Only 46 respondents reported being in compliance with the new outdoor education requirements. The most commonly offered outdoor activities were orienteering, hiking, backpacking, ropes courses, and canoeing; each was offered by 50-62 respondents. Respondents also indicated the percentage of class time spent in lecture or field settings, teaching aids used in outdoor instruction, the number of units of outdoor education required for physical education majors, instructors' highest degree attained and area of degree concentration, instructors' teaching experience, titles of textbooks used, perceived need for the development of an outdoor education text, instructors' willingness to contribute to a future text or to adopt such a text, and the didactic and activity content areas that should be included in a new text. An open-ended question completed by 34 respondents elicited three themes: concern that region would affect the content of outdoor education courses, preference for no required outdoor education courses, and desire to review any new text that is developed. (Contains 4 references and 26 recommended readings.) (SV)

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Abstract

Outdoor/Adventure education is a relatively new content area required by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) for students majoring in physical education. Due to these new requirements teacher preparation programs in physical education have yet to adopt a standardized curriculum. Consequently, content and curricular support materials vary widely across the nation. This has resulted in the necessity for surveying the status and programmatic needs to assist faculty teaching in this area.

This study surveyed 536 colleges and universities in the United States with undergraduate programs in physical education. Results of the survey indicated a need to develop course/syllabus guidelines and comprehensive outdoor education text to assist them in complying with NCATE requirements and improve program quality.

Introduction

Activities traditionally associated with outdoor education provide participants with a degree of risk, challenge, and excitement. Currently, in North America, activities such as backpacking, hiking, orienteering, biking, rock climbing, skiing, and other types of adventurous recreation are becoming increasingly popular. Millions of school-aged children and others are becoming increasingly involved in outdoor pursuits. More people and students are turning to educational programs that offer instruction and/or simply participation in outdoor adventure activities (Darst & Armstrong, 1980; Davis & Carter, 1994; Rohnke, Tait & Wall, 1989, 1994; and Seaborge & Dudley, 1994).

Educational and recreational programs that include physical education have improved their offerings with more opportunities for adventure activities. Offering leadership training in outdoor education to college students majoring in physical education has become a must to meet the growing popular demand for outdoor adventures. The training provides the knowledge, physical skills, and attitudes that are necessary for thorough enjoyment of these pursuits, to teach the students how to achieve control in high-risk situations and to instill a healthy respect for the natural environment. Better-prepared and qualified leaders should be able to win the confidence of administrators and convince them of the increased need for expanded outdoor education programs in public schools.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), a national accreditating body, has clearly stated that outdoor education competency in

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physical education teacher education undergraduate programs have to be met in order to be accredited. The National Organization for Sports and Physical Education (NASPE) states that students should have opportunities to develop participatory skills in adventure and other challenge activities such as camping, hiking, backpacking, skiing, skating, canoeing, walking, frisbee, and cycling. California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) expects a university to consider the extent to which the program includes study of outdoor education activities such as orienteering, outdoor survival skills, ropes, canoeing, hiking, and backpacking when reviewers judge whether a program meets this standard.

The addition of outdoor adventure activities to the physical education teaching curriculum has proved to be a most significant development. The instruction of these pursuits makes available new opportunities for people to find enjoyable movement activities that can be practiced for a lifetime. Many physical education teachers have become disenchanted with traditional sports and recreation activities. They seek alternative lifetime activities that provide a physical and mental challenge, confidence building, teamwork, and even a degree of risk, or an element of danger.

It has become apparent that the utilization of outdoor education activities in physical education teacher education curriculum has become abundant. These activities help educate the future prospective physical education teacher to love, enjoy, and care for the outdoors and help them to learn to preserve the environment and transcend their passion of the love of nature to new generations.

Purpose of the Study

A group of outdoor education professors developed the National Outdoor Education Task Force (OETF) for the purpose of determining the status of outdoor education in the nation's universities within physical education programs. The first task was to collect essential information about outdoor education course(s) in order to disseminate the information to interested faculty. The results of this initial effort will be used to create a knowledge base for curriculum and text materials to support these courses.

Methodology

The OETF developed a five-part Outdoor Education Survey consisting of the following categories: (1) Accreditation requirements, (2) Curriculum/Instruction, (3) Instructor qualifications, (4) Textbook used, and (5) Additional Comments. This survey had discrete (yes and no) response items, selected response items, and open-ended response items in each category.

Category I (Accreditation Requirements): This category contained three questions regarding accreditation by NCATE, CCTC (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing), and other accrediting agencies.

Category II (Curriculum/Instruction): This category contained four questions related to activities taught in the curriculum, format for teaching the course, teaching aids used in delivering the course, and number of units devoted to outdoor education in the program.

Category III (Instructor Qualifications): This category contained three questions about faculty preparation in regard to the highest degree attained, area(s) of specialization and the number of years of teaching experience.

Category IV (Textbook): This category contained six questions determining the extent to which text were used by the respondents. The respondents were asked to respond to a checklist of contents and outdoor activities they felt would be necessary in a text. Also, the respondents were asked if a text were to be developed in this subject area would they participate in its development and then adopt the text.

Category V (Additional Comments): was an open-ended section of the survey for the respondents to add relevant comments not covered by the questionnaire.

There are 536 Colleges and Universities in the United States with undergraduate programs in physical education. Surveys were mailed to all of these institutions and 162 were returned for a response rate of 30%. The results were tabulated for each category of the survey and presented in tables and graphs summarizing the major results.

Results

Survey results in the category of Accreditation Requirements showed that less than one-half of the schools were compliant with NCATE accreditation requirements for outdoor education. Of the 162 respondents 46 schools (28%) reported being in compliance and 106 (65%) reported non-compliance. There were 10 schools or (6%) who did not respond to this item. The second item on the survey for Accreditation Requirements was specific to schools in California and related to the California Commission for Teacher Credentialing (CCTC). Because this item did not apply to 137 schools nationally who responded to this survey, the tabulation for this item was based on the 25 schools from California who responded to the survey. Four schools (16%) were in compliance with the CCTC and 21 (84%) of the schools were non-compliant with CCTC standards. The third question on offering outdoor education regardless of accreditation requirements indicated that 85 (52.5%) of the schools did offer the course in physical education teacher preparation curriculum and 65 (40.1%) did not offer the course(s). Twelve schools (7.4%) did not respond to this item. Table 1 summarizes these results.

	NCATE		CCTC		Part of PE Program	
Yes	46	28%	4	16%	85	52.5%
No	106	65%	21	84%	65	40.1%
No Response	10	6%	137 not applicable		12	7.4%

Table 1. Reported levels of compliance with accreditation requirements in physical education teacher preparation programs.

Survey results in the category of Curriculum/Instruction were ranked according to most common activity to least common activity presented in the courses. Table 2 lists the number of respondents and percentage in rank order by activity. Activities presented most commonly or reported by at least 25% of the respondents were ranked as follows: Orienteering, Hiking, Backpacking, Ropes Course, Canoeing, Initiative Games, Rock-Climbing, Biking, and Survival Skills. Activities presented least commonly or reported by less than 25% of the respondents were ranked as follows: Swimming, Outdoor, Casting/Angling, Other (SCUBA, in-line skating, mountaineering, archery, map reading,

riflery, hunting, environmental education, and conservation activities), Cross Country, Skiing, Kayaking, Down Hill Skiing, Rafting, Snow Shoeing, Wind Surfing, and Outdoor Photography.

Orienteering	62/38.3%	Biking	41/25.3%	Skiing	20/12.3%
Hiking	62/38.3%	Survival Skills	40/24.7%	Kayaking	20/12.3%
Backpacking	60/37.0%	Swimming	39/22.1%	Down Hill Skiing	17/10.5%
Ropes Course	50/30.9%	Outdoor	27/16.7%	Rafting	15/9.3%
Canoeing	50/30.9%	Casting/Angling	24/13.8%	Snow Shoeing	12/7.4%
Initiative Games	45/27.8%	Other (see *)	23/14.2%	Wind Surfing	5/3.1%
Rock Climbing	42/25.9%	Cross Country	23/14.2%	Photography	3/1.9%

* SCUBA, in-line skating, mountaineering, archery, map reading, riflery, hunting, environmental education, and conservation activities.

Table 2. Reported frequencies and percentages of outdoor-related activities taught within physical education curricula.

Table 3 presents the percentage of class time spent in lecture or field settings. Fifty-one respondents out of 92 (55%) indicated they spent 20 to 30% of their class time in lecture. Forty-two respondents out of 89 (47%) indicated they spend 70 to 80% of their class time in the field.

	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
Lecture	9	27	24	11	9	5	3	3	1	0
Field	2	2	6	9	9	11	19	23	6	2
Other	11	9	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3. Percentage of class time spent in either lecture or field settings.

Table 4 lists the Teaching Aids used for the course. Video use was the most frequently reported at 47.5% and the Internet was the least frequently reported at 27.8%. Also reported were Guests, Text, and Periodicals.

Teaching aids	Counts	Percentage
Internet	45	27.8
Video	77	47.5
Periodicals	59	36.4
Guests	67	41.4
Text	65	40.1

Table 4. Teaching aids used in outdoor instruction.

Table 5 presents the number of units of outdoor education required for physical education majors. Thirty-four percent of the respondents require no units in outdoor education. Thirty percent require one unit, twenty-four percent require two units, twenty-five percent require three units, and thirteen percent require four or more units.

Number	Units and Credits
26/34%	
23/30%	1

18/24%	2
19/25%	3
4/5%	4
6/8%	other

Table 5. Outdoor education units (credits) required for physical education majors.

Survey results in the category of Instructor Qualifications were summarized in the areas of highest degree attained, area of degree concentration, and teaching experience. Table 6 indicates 36.8% of the respondents had earned their terminal degree, 48.7% of the respondents had earned a master's degree, and the remaining had earned a bachelor's degree and/or other certifications.

	Ph.D. Ed.D.	Master	Bachelor	*Other
Counts	43	57	6	11
percentage	36.8%	48.7%	5.1%	9.4%

*Recreation Administration, Recreation and Leisure Activities, Skiing.

Table 6. Instructor qualifications.

Table 7 indicates that 79% of the respondents had a degree in physical education, 7% had a degree in outdoor education, and 14% listed other (for example, Wilderness Education and NOLS).

	Physical Education	Outdoor Education	*Other
Percentage	79%	7%	14%

*Leisure behaviors, Wilderness Education, Recreational Parks and Leisure Services.

Table 7. Instructors' degree posted.

Table 8 lists the number of years of teaching experience reported by the respondents. Sixty-five percent had college teaching experience, twenty-two percent had public school teaching experience, and thirteen percent listed other as their experience.

	1-3 years	3-6 years	7-9 years	10 years +	Total	percentage
College	10	11	8	26	56	65.1%
Public School	5	8	2	4	19	22.1%
other	3	4	3	1	11	12.8%

Table 8. Years of teaching experience.

Survey results in the category of Textbook included several areas: whether a text was used; the title of the text used; whether there was a need to develop an outdoor education text; what content would be necessary in an outdoor education text; whether the respondent would be interested in being a contributor to a new text; and if the text were created would they adopt the text. Table 9 indicates thirty-one percent of the respondents used a text for their outdoor education course, twenty–nine percent used no text for the course, and forty percent did not respond to this item.

	Yes	No	No Response
Counts	50	47	65
Percentage	30.9%	29%	40.1%

Table 9. Textbook use by respondents.

There were thirty-one different titles of texts reported by the respondents. The texts used by two schools were:
Cowstails and Cobra's II (Rohnke, 1989), Lightweight Camping: A 4 Season Source Book (Hatton, 1981), Outdoor Adventure Activities for School and Recreation Programs Darst and Armstrong (1980), and Quicksilver (Rohnke, 1995). The other texts reported are listed in Figure 1.

The Backpacker's Field Manual by Curtis
Backpacking by Berger
Boy Scout Field Book by the Boy Scouts of America
Camp Counseling by Mitchell
The Camping Guide to Outdoor Pursuits by Drury
Cowstails and Cobra's II by Rohnke
Experiential Education in Higher Education by Kraft and Keilsmeier
Tom Brown's Field Guide to the Wilderness Survival by Brown
Mountaineering: Freedom of the Hills by Mountaineers Climbing Committee
Advanced Backpacking: a Trailside Guide by Berger
How to Climb a Rock by Long
Leadership and Administration of Outdoor Pursuits by Ford
Lightweight Camping: A Four Season Source Book by Hatton
Outdoor Adventure Activities for School and Recreation Programs by Darst
Outdoor Education by Klaus
Outdoor Pursuits by Blanchard
Outdoor Recreation by Ibrahim
Skiing by Conner
Quicksilver by Rohnke
Outdoor Recreation in America by Jensen
Outdoor Recreation Safety by Dougherty
Sports and Recreational Activities by Mood
Take a New Bearing by Ford
Teaching Lifelong Leisure Activities by Bennett
Teaching in the Outdoors by Hammerman
Wilderness Educator by Cockrell
Your Way with the Map and Compass Orienteering by Disley

Figure 1. Adopted Texts Reported by the Respondents.

Table 10 lists 36.4% of the respondents as indicating a need for the development of an outdoor education text. Twenty-five percent indicated a new text was not necessary and 38% listed no response to this item. Fifteen percent of the respondents

	Yes	No	No Response
Counts	59	41	62
Percentage	36.4%	25.3%	38.3%

Table 10. Respondents' perceived need for a text.

indicated they would be willing to contribute to the development of the text (see Table 11). Forty-seven schools and universities indicated they would be willing to adopt the new text (see Table 12).

	Yes	No	Maybe	No Response
Counts	24	63	1	74
Percentage	14.8%	38.9	.62	45.7

Table 11. The frequencies and percentages of respondents willing to contribute to the development of a future text outdoor education.

	Yes	No	Maybe	No Response
Counts	47	14	18	83
Percentage	29.0%	8.6%	11.1%	51.2%

Table 12. The frequencies and percentages of instructors willing to adopt a new text in outdoor education.

Figure 2 and Figure 3 illustrate the didactic and activity content reported as necessary for the development of an outdoor education textbook. Both the didactic and activity content is presented in rank order of most reported topics/activities to least reported topics/activities.

Didactic	**Percentage**
Developing an Outdoor Pursuit Program	56
Introduction to Outdoor Pursuits	51
Planning for Outdoor Trips and Expeditions	49
Areas for Outdoor Adventure	45
Organizations and Other Resources	44
Measurements and Evaluations for the Outdoor Program	42
Safety and Rescue	other
Equipment Repair and Maintenance	other
Risk Management	other
Wilderness Medicine	other
Survival Skills	other
Curriculum and Unit Ideas for PK-12 Teachers	other

Figure 2. Necessary didactic content reported by respondents in rank-order.

Activities		
Orienteering (33%)	Backpacking (33%)	Hiking (33%)
Ropes Course	Rock climbing (30%)	Survival Skills (28%)
Initiative Games (28%)	Swimming (24%)	Casting and Angling (18%)
Rafting (16%)	Kayaking (16%)	Cross Country Skiing (16%)
Wind Surfing (14%)	Down Hill Skiing (14%)	Snow Shoeing (13%)
Skiing (13%)	Outdoor photography (9)	Rappelling & Riflery (7%)

Figure 3. Necessary Activities Content Reported by Respondents in Order.

The open-ended question at the end of the survey netted a variety of responses with three common threads:

A. a concern that the region will affect content of outdoor education courses
B. a preference for no required outdoor education courses
C. a desire to review any new text that is developed

There were 34 respondents to the open-ended question.

Conclusions and Discussion

Since there was a 30% response rate to the survey, results can be generalized to the population of 536 College and University undergraduate physical education programs across the nation. The majority of outdoor education courses reported do not comply with accreditation by NCATE but are part of the physical education programs. While there was a general concern stated by the respondents about the regional nature of outdoor education activities, the survey indicated very few activities of a program-specific nature. Most programs reported teaching orienteering, hiking, backpacking, canoeing, rock climbing, biking, skiing, kayaking, rafting, and so forth.

The instructional format reported in the survey indicates students in outdoor education courses spend more time in the field than in the classroom. Teachers use a variety of traditional teaching aids. There is no consistent number of credit hours offered for outdoor education courses. However, universities reported a requirement of one to three credit hours.

Most instructors of outdoor education courses were prepared at least at the master's level with a major in physical education. Thirty-seven percent were prepared with a terminal degree and forty-nine percent with a master's degree. Most of the faculty teaching outdoor education had college-level teaching experience with about half having over ten years of experience.

Only about one-third of the schools used a text for their outdoor education course. There was no consistency in the title of the text used for the course. If a text was used, it was not comprehensive in regard to covering all aspects of outdoor education content. Many of the titles were activity-specific such as backpacking, rock climbing, initiative games, and so forth. There is no universally recognized text for the outdoor education course. Survey respondents clearly indicated the need for a comprehensive text in outdoor education. A third of the respondents were interested in adopting the text if it were developed.

Survey respondents were specific about the important content necessary to introducing outdoor pursuits. It would be essential to define outdoor education and develop an outdoor pursuit program design. Major concepts to be included are planning for outdoor expeditions, measurement/evaluation for the outdoor program, areas for outdoor adventure, organizations and resources, safety and rescue, equipment repair and maintenance, risk management, unit ideas for PK–12 teachers, and activities. The recommended activities would be orienteering, skiing, rock climbing, kayaking, hiking, survival skills, backpacking, rafting, ropes, and others.

Recommendations

There is a need to develop course content/syllabus guidelines that would meet NCATE Accreditation requirements. Since outdoor education should be experientially oriented, it would be especially important to include the learner competencies/outcomes for the major outdoor education activities. The outdoor education course should not be less than two credit hours with at least one of the credit hours being designated as field experience.

Special attention needs to be given to the outdoor education activities in the program design. Outdoor education experts would need to agree on the essential basic activities required in a course that could be supplemented with regional-specific

activities. The focus of the instruction needs to be field-based rather than classroom oriented. Any teaching aid would be a supplement to the hands-on experience in the field. In planning the field-based experiences, consideration for the minimum number of instructional minutes for each activity needs attention.

There is a need to develop a comprehensive outdoor education text for physical education majors with both theory and field-based information. The content of the text should embrace the concerns of the educators who responded to this national survey.

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